

**IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
HOUSTON DIVISION**

IN RE:	§	CASE NO. 25-30155
	§	
ALLIANCE FARM AND RANCH, LLC,	§	(CHAPTER 11)
	§	
DEBTOR	§	
	§	
IN RE:	§	CASE NO. 25-31937
	§	
ALLIANCE ENERGY PARTNERS, LLC,	§	(CHAPTER 11)
	§	
DEBTOR	§	
	§	

**DECLARATION OF WILLIAM HOTZE IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION OF THE
OFFICIAL COMMITTEE OF UNSECURED CREDITORS FOR ENTRY OF AN
ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EMPLOYMENT AND RETENTION OF
DYKEMA GOSSETT, PLLC AS COUNSEL, EFFECTIVE AS OF MAY 13, 2025**

I, William Hotze, do state and declare as follows:

1. I am over the age of 21, of sound mind, and am competent to testify to all the matters set forth below. I submit this declaration (the “Declaration”) in support of the *Application of the Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors for Entry of an Order Authorizing the Employment and Retention of Dykema Gossett PLLC as Counsel, Effective as of May 13, 2025* (the “Application”), filed contemporaneously herewith in these Cases.¹ The matters stated in this Declaration are within my personal knowledge. If I were called as a witness, I could and would testify competently to the factual statements set forth herein. To the extent that information disclosed herein requires supplementation, amendment, or modification upon Dykema’s completion of further analysis or as additional information become available to it, a supplemental declaration will be filed with the Court.

¹ Capitalized terms used but not otherwise defined herein shall have the meanings ascribed to them in the Application.

2. I am an attorney licensed to practice law in the State of Texas and have been a member in good standing of the Texas Bar since 2013. I am also admitted to practice before the United States District and Bankruptcy Courts for the Western, Southern, Eastern and Northern Districts of Texas.

3. I am member of the law firm of Dykema Gossett PLLC (the “Firm” or “Dykema”). My office address is 5 Houston Center, 1401 McKinney Street, Suite 1625, Houston, TX 77010, telephone: (713) 904-6900, and e-mail: whotze@dykema.com. My State Bar Number is 24087754.

4. On May 13, 2025, the Committee retained Dykema as its counsel, subject to Court approval. Dykema began rendering services to the Committee immediately following its selection by the Committee.

5. Dykema comprises nearly 400 lawyers who practice in 14 offices throughout the United States. The attorneys in Dykema’s Bankruptcy and Financial Restructuring group have played significant roles in a wide array of chapter 11 cases across the country, including acting as counsel for official committees of unsecured creditors in the following cases: *In re Kalera, Inc.*, No. 23-90290 (Bankr. S.D. Tex. 2023); *In re Connect Transport, Inc.*, No. 16-33971-hdh7 (Bankr. N.D. Tex. 2016); *In re Dune Energy, Inc.*, No. 15-10336 (Bankr. W.D. Tex. 2015); *In Yellow Cab Affiliation, Inc.*, No. 15-9539 (Bankr. N.D. Ill. 2015); *In re Texas Rangers Baseball Partners*, No. 10-43400 (DML) (Bankr. N.D. Tex. 2010); *In re Gulf Fleet Holdings, Inc.*, No. 10-50713 (Bankr. W.D. La. 2010); *In re Deep Marine Holdings, Inc.*, No. 09-39313 (Bankr. S.D. Tex. 2009); *In re Encompass Services Corp.*, No. H-06-CV-0392 (Bankr. S.D. Tex. 2006); and *In re AgriBiotech, Inc.*, No. 00-10533 (Bankr. D. Nev. 2000). The cases listed above are a small sample of Dykema’s experience representing official committees of unsecured creditors.

6. Pursuant to section 327 of the Bankruptcy Code and Rule 2014(a) of the Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure, I make this declaration in support of the Application.

I. GENERAL STATEMENT

7. Neither I, the Firm, nor any member, senior counsel, or associate thereof, insofar as I have been able to ascertain, has any connection with the Debtors, their creditors, the Trustee or any other parties in interest herein, or their respective attorneys and accountants, the U.S. Trustee, or any person employed in the Office of the United States Trustee or any Bankruptcy Judge currently serving on the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Texas, except as set forth herein. Additionally, we are “disinterested persons” pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 101(14), and hold no actual or potential conflicts, subject to the disclosures in section III below. Described in section III are all presently known connections and relationships between Dykema, on the one hand, and the Debtors, the Debtors’ creditors, the Trustee, any other party-in-interest, their respective attorneys and accountants, the United States Trustee and any person employed in the office of the United States Trustee on the other hand. In preparing this Declaration, Dykema performed a review of the connections and relationships between Dykema and certain creditors of the Debtors and other parties in interest. Dykema is continuing to review conflicts. To the extent that I become aware of any additional relationships, I will promptly file a supplemental declaration. Dykema will implement appropriate internal procedures to protect the interests of the Debtors in connection with the representations and relationships described below.

II. SEARCH METHODS

8. The Firm has made the following investigation of its connections prior to submitting this Declaration. We have utilized Dykema’s conflicts database management system (the “System”), which is designed to reveal the potential for conflicts of interest and other

connections to existing and former clients and to many thousands of third parties Dykema never represented. An employee of the Firm, under my supervision, entered the names of the parties provided by the Debtors through the Firm's System. The parties entered in the Firm's System with respect to the Firm's conflicts check in this Case are set forth on Schedule 1 attached hereto (the "Potential Parties in Interest").

9. Such results have been reviewed by me. Where any question arose, I contacted the appropriate members of Dykema shown on the System report as having previously submitted relevant connections information to the System. We have also researched relevant "hits" for the information set forth above. From such attorneys and these databases, we have obtained information and guidance with regard to the particular connections reflected. We have completed that analysis, and the results are discussed below. To the extent our search indicated Dykema has performed services for any of the Potential Parties in Interest during the last 5 years, the identities of such parties and Dykema's relationships with such parties are set forth in Schedule 2, attached hereto. Further each of the representations identified on Schedule 2 is wholly unrelated to the Debtors and its Case.

III. THE CONNECTIONS CURRENTLY KNOWN TO DYKEMA

10. Dykema represents that, to the best of its knowledge, except as disclosed on Schedule 2, Dykema knows of no fact or situation that would represent a potential or actual conflict of interest for Dykema with regard to the Committee at this time.

11. To the extent that issues arise that would cause the Committee to be adverse to any of Dykema's clients and/or their affiliates such that it would not be appropriate for Dykema to represent the Committee with respect to any such matters, the Committee will retain conflicts counsel to represent the Committee with respect to those matters.

12. To the best of my knowledge, information and belief after reasonable inquiry, Dykema is disinterested withing the meaning of section 101(14) of the Bankruptcy Code, in that neither I, Dykema, nor any of its members, special counsel or associates:

(a) are creditors, equity security holder, or insiders of the Debtors;

(b) are or within two years before the Petition Date were, a director, officer, or employee of the Debtors; or

(c) have an interest materially adverse to the interest of the estate or of any class of creditors or equity security holders, by reason of any direct or indirect relationship to, connection with or interest in the Debtors or for any other reason.

13. It is possible that Dykema may have represented or may continue to represent creditors or interest holders of the Debtors in wholly unrelated matters from time to time, but Dykema is not representing and will not represent any such persons in this Case. To the extent Dykema becomes aware of such representation, Dykema will file a supplement to this Declaration.

14. As part of its practice, Dykema appears in many cases, proceedings, and transactions involving many different attorneys, counsel, accountants, financial consultants, and investment bankers, some of which now or in the future may represent claimants and parties in interest in this Case. I have advised the Committee that Dykema has not and will not represent any such entities in relation to the Debtors' Case and that Dykema does not have any relationship with any such entities that would be adverse to the Committee or its interests in the matters upon which Dykema is to be employed.

15. Dykema has not received a retainer in this Case. Dykema will represent no entity other than the Committee in these chapter 11 cases.

16. Dykema recognizes, and takes very seriously, its continuing responsibility to be aware of, and to further disclose, any relationship or connection between it and other parties-in-interest to the Debtor's bankruptcy estate as they appear or become recognized during the Case.

HOTZE DECLARATION IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF DYKEMA GOSSETT, PLLC.

Accordingly, we reserve the right to, and shall supplement this disclosure if necessary as more information becomes available to us.

IV. COMPENSATION

17. The Committee understands that Dykema intends to seek compensation for professional services rendered in connection with the Debtor's case, subject to the Court's approval, and in compliance with the applicable provisions of Subject to Court approval and in accordance with section 330(a) of the Bankruptcy Code, compensation will be payable to Dykema on an hourly basis, plus reimbursement of actual, necessary expenses incurred by Dykema. Below are the primary attorneys and paraprofessional within Dykema who will represent the Committee and their respective discounted hourly rates:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Hourly Rate</u>
William Hotze	Member	\$675
Nicholas Zugaro	Senior Counsel	\$630

18. From time to time, other attorneys and paralegals from Dykema may serve the Committee in connection with the matter.

19. Dykema has advised the Committee that the hourly rates set forth above are subject to annual increases in the normal course of Dykema's business. In the event of any such increase, Dykema will provide the U.S. Trustee and the Committee with written notice of any such increase and file a supplemental affidavit (a "Supplemental Affidavit") with the Court. Any Supplemental Affidavit will explain the basis for the requested rate increase in accordance with section 330(a)(3)(F) of the Bankruptcy Code.

20. It is Dykema's policy, in all areas of practice, to charge its clients for additional expenses incurred in connection with the client's case. The expenses charged to clients include,

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among other things, postage in excess of \$2.50 and express mail charges, special or hand delivery charges, internal photocopying charges, external photocopying charges at the actual cost charged, print charge for documents in excess of 20 pages at \$0.15 per page, travel expenses, expenses for “working meals,” and computerized research. Dykema does not charge for long distance calls other than conference calls. Dykema does not charge for incoming or outgoing telecopier services. Otherwise, Dykema will charge the Committee for expenses in a manner and at rates consistent with charges made generally to Dykema’s other clients and consistent with this Court’s rules and the applicable U.S. Trustee guidelines.

21. No agreement exists, nor will any be made, to share any compensation received by Dykema for its services of behalf of the Committee with any other person or firm.

22. The foregoing constitutes the verified statement of the person to be employed, required under Bankruptcy Rule 2014.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury on this 12th day of June, 2025, that the foregoing statements are true and correct.

By: /s/ William Hotze
William Hotze